

The Empire and Christianity

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by no means wholly one of reproach. For it also implies that Christianity assisted the partial fusion which took place when at length the frontier barriers gave way and the West was rushed by the Germanic races. These races were themselves Christianised to a certain extent. They, too, worshipped the Cross and the Christ, and this circumstance alone must, to a very considerable degree, have mitigated for the Roman provinces the terrors and disasters of invasion. It is true that the invaders were for the most part: Arians, though it is a manifest absurdity

to suppose that the free Germans from beyond the Rhine understood even the elements of a controversy so metaphysical and so purely Greek,—and, when Arianism and Catholicism fought, they tipped their barbs with poison.^{s* 1} never yet,** said Ammianus Marcellinus,^M found wild beasts so savagely hostile to one another." * But the fact remains that the German and Gothic conquerors, who settled where they had conquered, accepted the civilisation of the vanquished even though they modified it to their own mind; they did not wipe it out and substitute their own, as did the Turk and the Moor when they *| i|jirarril_f lutrr on, .it the head of their devastating i|uitl_r; . If, therefore, Christianity tended to wrtKnt, it ;il'0 tended to assimilate, and we are not MII»* tlul th** titter proccsts wan not fully as important a% th«' f»»rw«*r. The Roman Empire, as a uni* vn-^tlj»»wri, li.tit l**ujj !>< rit doomed; Christianity,

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